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AN
ADDRESS
TO

PERSONS OF FASHION,

Containing some PARTICULARS relating to

BALLS:

And a few Occasional HINTS concerning

PLAY-HOUSES, CARD-TABLES, &c

In which is introduced

The Character of *LUCINDA*,

A LADY of the very BEST FASHION,
and of most extraordinary PIETY.

By a Gentleman of the University of OXFORD.



L O N D O N :

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Advertisement.

LADIES and GENTLEMEN,

WHAT gave rise to the following attempt was my hearing a young Lady affirm, that she saw no harm in going to a BALL. After I had put together the heads of it, I shewed it to a few friends, who were of opinion it might be productive of some good if I would publish it, which I the more readily consented to do, when I observed how much the custom of giving Balls at private houses has of late prevailed.

My hearty wish is, that it may have the same happy effect upon every reader of it in print, as I have reason to hope it had in manuscript upon the Lady for whose benefit it was chiefly drawn up; wherefore, recommending it to the blessing of God, and humbly submitting it to your candor, I beg leave to subscribe myself,

Your most obedient

and most humble Servant,

The Author.



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A N

A D D R E S S

T O

PERSONS of FASHION, &c.




INTRODUCTION.

ALTHOUGH it is the undoubted duty of every *Christian* to do all in his power to promote the *Salvation* of others, yet he should be careful to *guide his words with discretion*, and not to urge any thing upon those with whom he hopes to succeed, without backing his cause with weighty and forcible arguments; lest he should make them imagine, because he advances little or nothing on his own side of the question, that consequently there is little or nothing to be said in support of it.

It is upon this plan that I purpose, with God's assistance, to pursue my design of proving the absolute *unlawfulness* of the now so fashionable diversion of BALLS; and tho' I am sensible that the mighty torrent of custom is against me, and that I may be branded with the appellation of a *precise fanatic*; yet I hope to demonstrate with the clearest evidence, that BALLS are entirely inconsistent with the Spirit of *Christianity*, and that it is not possible to be present at them without incurring great guilt. All I desire of those who read the following pages is, that they will for a little while divest themselves of all prejudice, and not blindly resolve to condemn, before they read. The arguments I shall bring, are all founded upon Scripture and plain Reason; therefore till they can be answered from Scripture and plain Reason, it is neither Laughter, Sneers, nor Ridicule, that can invalidate their force.

Observe here, that I address myself chiefly to those who have some good desires, and that indulge themselves in the practice of going to BALLS, because they are not convinced of the great wickedness of them; for to prove their sinfulness to such as are determined to go to them at all events, would indeed be labour in vain.



SECTION THE FIRST.

ALL the arguments I ever remember to have heard brought in vindication of BALLS, are,

First, That they are no where forbidden in Scripture, and consequently are innocent. *Secondly*, That many good Christians go to them. *Thirdly*, That provided a person does not make a constant practice of going to them, there can be no harm in them now and then by way of *relaxation*; and that by mixing ourselves sometimes with the diversions of the world, we return with greater relish to retirement and religious duties.

That BALLS are no where forbidden by name or in any particular place of Scripture, may be readily allowed, yet it ought to be a much more forcible argument to make us abstain from them, that they are forbidden by the whole voice of *Revelation*, inasmuch as every thing is strictly forbidden that may disorder our Souls; and be destructive of that meek, humble, contrite Spirit, which constitutes the real Christian; and that BALLS do tend intirely to eradicate such a temper, and cannot but be very pernicious to our souls, will be fully proved hereafter. There are many things not particularly forbidden in Scripture, which yet every one must allow to be very great and hainous sins;
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and were we to do whatsoever we please, from the notion that what we do is no where forbidden in Scripture, what extravagancies would such a fancy lead us into? We are no where throughout the whole Bible commanded not to set an house on fire, yet no-body can be so weak as to imagine it is no sin wilfully to commit such an action; and that because the whole tenor of Scripture forbids us to injure our neighbour. Besides, had our Saviour and his Apostles given a particular prohibition against all the fooleries that the depravity of fallen man hath invented, might we not say with Saint John, *that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written* (a)?

But have we any reason to think that at the time when *Christianity* was first preached, there were any such pleasures among *Christians* as are to be met with in a modern *Ball-Room*? No, the honour of these improvements is all due to us, who have been so long blessed with the transcendent light of the Gospel; scarcely did the *Heathen world*, in the midst of their idolatrous darkness, ever arrive at that exquisite perfection in all kinds of Diversions, Luxury, and Extravagance, that is now to be met with amongst those that are reckoned *good Christians*.

But granting that, at the time of the planting of *Christianity*, there really were some such entertainments as *modern Balls*; yet we cannot suppose that *Christ* and his *Apostles* should think it necessary to tell their *Converts*, that they could not rant and skip

(a) John xxi. 25.

skip about like buffoons and merry-andrews, in all the glare of expensive dress, amongst a crowd of unconverted Heathens, either for their own diversion, or for that of the company, and at the same time preserve in them a truly Christian Spirit, and be *striving to enter in at the strait gate* (b). Can any man in his senses make such a supposition?

But here, (according to the *second* argument) it will be said, that the world (at least the part of it which we inhabit) is now become *Christian*, and that the company we meet at these *nocturnal revellings*, called BALLS, are not *Heathens*, but *Christians*. I grant that they are so called, and that they have the outside appearance of *Christians*; but are they Disciples of that blessed *Jesus, who is meek and lowly in heart* (c)? *Are they all crucified to the world, and the world to them* (d)? *Do they hunger and thirst after righteousness* (e)? Are they of the number of those *poor in Spirit*, or of those *meek and blessed mourners* (e), to whom our Lord has promised the kingdom of Heaven? *Are they all pressing forward towards the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus, that is set before them* (f)? *Are they redeeming the time, because the days are evil* (g)? Are they never engaged in that *foolish talking and jesting* which the Apostle tells us *are not convenient* (h)? but on the contrary, *Does the word of Christ dwell in them richly, teaching and admonishing one another* (i), *warning the unruly, comforting the feeble-minded, and supporting the weak* (k)? Are they among those who *suffer persecution because they live godly in Christ Jesus* (l)? *Are they clothed with*
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(b) Luke xiii. 24. (c) Matt. xi. 29. (d) Gal. vi. 14.
(e) Matt. v. 3, 4, 5, 6. (f) Philip. iii. 14. (g) Eph. v. 15.
(h) Eph. v. 4. (i) Coloss. iii. 16. (k) 1 Thess. v. 14.
(l) 2 Tim. iii. 12.

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the whole armour of God (m)? Do they, from a deep sense of remaining corruption, cry out with Paul, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death (n)! Are they giving diligence to make their calling and election sure (o); lest a promise being made them of entering into rest, any of them should seem to come short of it (p)? Are their affections set on things above, and not on things on the earth (q)? Are they not at all conformed to this present evil world (r)? and instead of taking thought wherewithal they shall be clothed (s), are they seeking to adorn themselves in the hidden man of the heart (t)? Are they renewed in the Spirit of their minds (u)? Does Christ dwell in their hearts by faith (x)? Do they take up their cross daily, and deny themselves and follow him (y)? Are they living as strangers and pilgrims upon earth (z)? Do they continue instant in prayer (a)? Have they that meek and quiet spirit, which St Peter assures us is of such great price in the sight of God (b)? Are they blameless and harmless, the sons of God, amidst a crooked and perverse nation, among whom they shine as lights in the world (c)? In a word, are they new creatures in Christ Jesus (d)?

These, and these only are Scripture-marks of a Christian; and Scripture is the only touch-stone whereby we can, according to the Apostle's command, *try the Spirits whether they are of God (e)*: and though we are not to pass hasty censures upon any, yet we must not so far dishonour the Gospel of our blessed Saviour, as to admit every vain pretender

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| (m) Eph. vi. 13. | (n) Rom. vii. 24. | (o) 2 Pet. i. 10. |
| (p) Heb. iv. i. | (q) Coloss. iii. 2. | (r) Rom. xii. 2. |
| (s) Matt. vi. 31. | (t) 1 Pet. iii. 4. | (u) Eph. iv. 23. |
| (x) Eph. iii. 17. | (y) Matt. xvi. 24. | (z) Heb. xi. 13. |
| (a) Rom. xii. 12. | (b) 1 Pet. iii. 4. | (c) Philip. ii. 15. |
| (d) 2 Cor. v. 17. | (e) 1 John iv. 1. | |

tender to *Christianity* into the class of true believers ; for as sure as God's word is true, any person who has not most, if not all the before-mentioned marks of a *Christian*, can lay no just claim to the name : Therefore before we waste our precious time at BALLS, PLAYS, CARD - TABLES, &c. upon the presumption that many *good Christians* make no scruple of going to them, how much does it behove us to examine, whether the Scripture-marks of a *Christian* do appear (and where they are, they must appear) in those persons by whose examples we suffer ourselves to be led ? For if these be the *Bible-evidences* of a *Christian*, and if they neither are or can be in those people who frequent what are called *places of public diversion*, then we are reduced to the necessity either of disbelieving the *Bible*, or else of believing that those who have them not are no *Christians* *.

Now, as it is impossible for any body to object against this conclusion, I pray you, for the future, not to entertain such unworthy notions of a *real Christian*, who has in him *the mind that was in Christ* (d), as to suppose that such an one will go to BALLS, PLAY-HOUSES, or any of those *Tabernacles of Vice*, which *Satan* and his Instruments have established in this Land ; and to which they have tacked the deluding name of *innocent diversions*,
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* *St Paul* assures us (*Rom. ii. 28.*) *that he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter : So he is certainly no Christian who is only one outwardly ; and baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter only.*

(d) *Philip. ii. 5.*

thereby to catch a greater number of unwary souls in their snares *.

I have now, I hope, fully confuted the two first arguments in favour of BALLS, and proved beyond all dispute, that they are forbidden by the whole tenor of Scripture, and that none but those who content themselves with the shadow of Christianity instead of the substance, will ever be frequenters of them.

The third argument in favour of BALLS yet remains to be answered; namely, that provided we do not make a constant practice of going to them, there

* It is indeed astonishing how any person, who makes the least pretensions to Christianity, can possibly be seen at a *Play-house*, since our Comedies in general are filled with such obscenities as a modest Heathen would have blushed at; yet even *these* are perhaps not productive of such evil consequences as many of our Tragedies, to which grave matrons carry their wards with the notion of their learning instructive lessons of VIRTUE and MORALITY. Now if ranting, romantic love, pride, ambition, revenge, lust, and cruelty, be esteemed virtue and morality, I must confess that most of our celebrated Tragedies abound with these; and that there is no place in the world better calculated to make young people truly virtuous and moral, than the two Theatres of *Covent-Garden* and *Drury-Lane*.

Since I have touched on this Subject, I beg leave to relate the following fact, which, however shocking it may appear to a Christian, I myself was eye-witness of a few years ago, when, with shame and sorrow I confess, I was a great frequenter of *Play-houses*. 'It was at the benefit of a certain Dancing-master: 'The boxes were mostly filled with young children, who, I suppose, were the Scholars of this Master, and came to have 'their infant ideas formed by a lewd Comedy. Between the 'acts, or after the play, I forget which, one of these children, 'who seemed to be about seven years old, came forth and 'danced two public minuets upon the stage with her master; 'without doubt to the no small satisfaction of her *good mamma*, 'whose heart must needs also dance with joy, to see her dear 'child so much applauded by so polite an audience; and that 'she had already acquired *le corps degagé*, and was totally freed 'from all *mauvaise honte* at so tender an age.'

there can be no harm in them now and then, by way of relaxation ; and that by mixing ourselves sometimes with the diversions of the world, we return with greater relish to retirement and religious duties.

To this I readily and briefly reply, that the same reason why we ought not *always* to be present at them, holds good why we should *never* be present at them ; unless you will roundly maintain that we can *serve God and Mammon* (e), and may compound with our blessed Lord and Saviour ; that when we are called *to give our hearts to God*, a part of them is only meant, and that we may sometimes indulge a trifling worldly spirit ; and sometimes be devout and heavenly-minded ; which is not at all less absurd than if you were to say, we may be sometimes drunk and sometimes sober ; sometimes honest and sometimes dishonest.

Let me farther add, that it is a miserable sign of our being yet *dead in sin*, that we can look upon such things as BALLS in the light of *relaxations* ; and to be able to take delight in them now and then, argues our nature to be as much unrenewed, as if we were pleased with them every night of our lives. And those who assert, that by mixing ourselves sometimes with the diversions of the world, we return with greater relish to retirement and religious duties ; might with as great propriety affirm, that BALLS and PLAYS were means of Grace, and highly proper to kindle a spirit of devotion ; that the best way to become truly religious, is to lay

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(e) Matth. vi. 24.

our good thoughts aside, to mix ourselves with carnal, unconverted company, and do as they do; in short, to stifle all the motions of God's Spirit, and drive him from us.

Would you not think any man a proper object for *Bedlam*, that should seriously give you such advice as this, in order to make you a more *zealous Christian*; yet, however monstrous and absurd this may seem, it is not at all more so, than the beforementioned argument for sometimes indulging ourselves in the diversions of the world, in order that we may return to the *practice of Religion* with greater earnestness and satisfaction.

But further, what a deplorable state must that soul be in, that is obliged to have recourse to such miserable shifts? How unfit to lanch into eternity, where we are to be happy day and night in sweet communion with God, and *in singing praises to the Lamb for ever and ever*; (and that without any BALLS, PLAYS, &c. to relax our minds and increase our zeal) how unfit, I say, must that soul be for such work as this, that had rather spend five or six hours at a BALL, than in *religious Meditation, Prayer, holy Discourse, reading the Word of God*, or any other *good Book*? Surely the joys of heaven must be very insipid to such an one, and the employment of saints and angels nothing but mere drudgery.

But it is not so with the *true Christian*. He looks upon his Master's yoke as *light and easy* (f); and his commandments are *more desirable to him than*

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fine gold; yea, sweeter than bony and the bony-comb (g.) The heart of the true Christian is entirely changed, and fixed upon heavenly objects; therefore he is constant and steady in his obedience. His Religion does not influence him only by fits and starts; nor can he lay it aside in order to attend the pleasures of the world, and take it up again when he has no other engagements upon his hands.

If this then be the character of the *true Christian*, what shall I say to those who have scarcely the shadow of it? Can you possibly think that you have obtained *the new heart* which God hath promised to his faithful people; and that *the same mind is in you that was also in Christ Jesus* (h); when you are pleased with those very things, with which the most profligate part of the world is pleased? Certainly there can be no greater proof that the same dispositions and tempers are in you that are in them, and that you are of those very people whom St Paul stiles *lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God* (i).

SECTION THE SECOND.

THUS much for my answer to the third argument in favour of BALLS. And now I cannot but think that every unprejudiced person will allow that what I have already advanced is sufficient to overthrow whatever has been, or can be

(g) Psal. xix. 10.

(i) 2 Tim. iii. 4.

(h) Phil. ii. 5.

be said in vindication of them. However, *First*, It is not my intention to stop here, but to proceed to shew yet farther, that the custom of BALLS is totally destructive of every religious sentiment, insomuch that it strikes at the very root of *Christianity*. *Secondly*, I shall lay before you the Reasons why the evil tendency, and actual wickedness of this kind of diversion, is nevertheless so little perceived, that many souls are hurried away by it, without being sensible of their error. *Lastly*, I shall add a word of exhortation and caution concerning the great danger of a blind conformity to custom and example.

And *First*, That the custom of BALLS is destructive of every religious sentiment, can any one deny who takes an impartial view of the frequenters of them, commonly called, *people of FASHION*, and *the BEST company*? By far the greater part of whom, if they live not in any outward notorious wickedness, yet seem perfectly indifferent and lukewarm in what concerns their souls: Their Religion is a thing by the by, a formal lifeless piece of ceremony, which only serves to their greater delusion.

Now if this be the case (and would to God it were not) may we not safely affirm, that there are more people kept from God by BALLS and such like things, than by more palpable and gross sins? For the latter are more apt to gall the sinner's conscience, and send him to Christ for ease; whereas the former, whilst they exclude the grace of God, and resist the strivings of his Spirit, rather keep
conscience

conscience asleep, and by that means gnaw like a canker-worm, and as it were undermine the soul without our being sensible of receiving any injury by them.

For whether all persons choose to look upon the diversion of BALLS as wicked or not ; yet we have the authority of an Apostle to say, that *she that lives in pleasure, is dead whilst she liveth* (k). She may indeed be in perfect health and spirits ; and be greatly admired for her gaiety and vivacity, whilst her poor soul is languishing and dying within her ; so that in proportion as she is alive to the pleasures of the world, she is dead to the things of God.

Another weighty *argument* against BALLS is, that they prevent people from looking into themselves, and cherish a vain, trifling, unchristian spirit ; not only for the time being, but oftentimes for whole days and weeks before and after ; as any unprejudiced person must allow, that has heard what wonderful satisfaction young Ladies frequently express at the thoughts of an approaching *Assembly*, and what preparations they make for their dress upon the *Ball-night* : And when this is over, what ample fields for scandal are opened from the behaviour and particularities of the company ? What edifying conversation does the fashionable or unfashionable flounce of such a Lady's negligee afford ? And how often is the rustic awkwardness or unparalleled elegance of an entertainment discussed ?

Perhaps

(k) 1 Tim. v. 6.

Perhaps some will say, it is true these things must be allowed to be contrary to the Spirit of Christianity, and many may be greatly hurt by them, but I never think of a BALL before I go to it; at least when I do, it is with meer indifference; I give myself no trouble about my dress, nor do I ever make any satyrical remarks upon the company; therefore however some people may abuse these *innocent amusements*, I never was the worse for them in all my life.

To this I answer; that it is a doleful mark of an unrenewed heart, to fancy that you can go to such places without being hurt by them; as nothing can more tend to deaden Grace and to extinguish the Life of God in the soul, than the vain conversation, and trifling (not to say wanton) behaviour of the company one generally meets with at BALLS. But if you are determined not to allow that you yourself are the worse for these things, (though you confess that many people may be greatly hurt by them;) yet, are you not aware of the harm you do by your example, and that you are soothing others in their sins, and contributing your part to keep them in a state of impenitency? Surely this will be no inconsiderable augmentation of your own guilt. No, you say, because if I did not go to these places, others would. It is not in my power to put a stop to such proceedings. But do not you by going do all in one person's power to countenance and encourage them? And, on the contrary, by absenting yourself, do not you do all in one person's power to discourage and prevent them?

them? If every body was to argue as you do, the most wicked and abominable customs would be openly supported and defended; whilst every supporter of them would be crying out, It is not I that am the cause of these doings, because they would be the same whether I contributed to them or not. Now let me ask these persons, Would you go upon the high-way, because you cannot prevent robbing? Or would you get drunk and swear, because though you allow such habits to be very wicked, yet you cannot absolutely prevent them. This is just as if you were to say, "Tho' I heartily wish there were no such sins as drunkenness and swearing, yet I am determined to do all in my power to encourage these abominable vices." Examine the case, and you will find it just the same with regard to BALLS.

Let me farther ask you, who pretend to some zeal for Religion, and yet make no scruple of going to BALLS, PLAYS, &c. how much oftener you have deprived yourselves of your natural rest to attend a BALL, than *to watch unto Prayer* (l)? How much more time you allot to adorn your body, when you are to shine in a stage-box, or to sparkle in a minuet amidst the circle of wondering beholders in a *Ball-room*, than you do each day to adorn your soul for *the general assembly and church of the first-born* (m). May I also demand in what state of mind for religious duties you return home from BALLS, whether you are never chagrined about some punctilio of precedency, or elated on account

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(l) 1 Pet. iv. 7.

(m) Heb. xii. 23.

of the extraordinary notice that was taken of you ? especially if it was your happy lot to open the BALL, or to lead up the first country-dance with the most honourable personage in the room ? O what noble matter of heart-felt joy must this be to a truly pious soul, who has experienced *the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost* (n) ! I would further desire to know, whether before you exclude the Sun in order to go to sleep, you use your Morning or Evening Prayers ? Or whether, as it is uncertain which are most proper, you esteem it most prudent to use neither ? Lastly, let me ask you, with a serious concern for your eternal welfare, what you can possibly think of the state of your souls, who whilst so many Christians are praising the Lord for having refreshed them with seasonable rest, and for having *safely brought them to the beginning of a new day* ; whilst so many Christians are thus happily employed, what can you, I say, think of the state of your souls, who, wearied with your last night's revel, are sinking into your beds with the din of the concluding country-dance in your ears, and having spent the night in the works of darkness, (in order to compleat the disorder) must waste the day in sleeping ?

Was I to intreat you to spend a few hours in Prayer and Meditation, you would think me *an hard task-master*, and would readily ask, What ? Are we to be always on our knees ? Is there no time for relaxation ? Yet, whilst you are capering about like so many frantic Bedlamites, when your usual

(n) Tit. iii. 5.

usual time for Evening Prayer is come, I fear you never once say, What? Are we to be at this work all night? Is there no time for Prayer and Meditation?

O for shame, for shame, at least retain so much respect for the name of JESUS, as not to presume to call yourselves Christians, whilst you are so far delighted with the service of the Devil, as to prefer it to the service of God.

Believe me, your case is very deplorable, and so much the more so, as you do not see your danger. O how happy is Satan when he can make people wear his chain and think themselves at liberty!

To proceed: Do you consider what hainous mockery you are guilty of before God every time you say your prayers, till you give up all thoughts of ever going to another BALL? For instance only, in the Lord's Prayer, how can you beg that the *Name of God may be ballowed* (o), when you are calmly resolved to neglect the common duty of waiting upon God in Evening-Prayer (perhaps also in Family-Prayer) in order to wait upon the Devil's children at a BALL? How can you pray that *God's kingdom may come, and his will be done in earth, as it is in heaven* (o); when your intentions are rather to thwart his holy will, to establish the kingdom of *Lucifer*, and to overthrow the kingdom of God? Lastly, How can you, without the highest degree of hypocrisy, beseech the Almighty *not to lead you into temptation, and to deliver*

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you

(o) Lord's Prayer.

you from evil (p); when you are absolutely determined to run yourself headlong into temptation? And so far to *choose the evil, and refuse the good*, as to pass over your stated times and exercises of devotion, on purpose to obtain the former and reject the latter?

Can any body say that there is the least aggravation in calling this a solemn mockery of Almighty God? May the Lord give you to lay these considerations seriously to heart: But if you are yet determined not to leave off going to BALLS, I dare not affirm, but that you had better leave off saying your prayers, for though *you honour God with your mouth, your heart is far from him (q)*; and the *prayer of the wicked is an abomination to (r) him* *.

(p) Lord's Prayer.

(q) Matt. xv. 8.

(r) Prov. xxviii. 9.

* It were much to be wished that all Mothers and Aunts would well consider these things, and instead of leading their Daughters and Neices about to BALLS, PLAYS, CARD-TABLES, &c. would bring them up *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, Eph. vi. 4. and see that their relaxations were such as Christians might innocently take; but, in general, so little do they reflect on the guilt they hereby pull down on their own heads, that many dear children of God have been forcibly compelled to go to these nurseries of sin and vice by their carnal relations; I mean not only by such as are notoriously wicked, but even by the more decent formalists, who can pity careless finners, and rail at the degeneracy of the age, whilst their greatest uneasiness is to see the true marks of real piety in any of their family. There are few parents that would have their children go to hell under the character of profligate offenders; yet if they will but go there decently with the name of *honest, agreeable, good sort of people*, they are generally as well satisfied, as they would be concerned to see them *working out their salvation with fear and trembling*, Phil. ii. 12.

SECTION

SECTION THE THIRD.

BESIDES all this, what can be more full and persuasive than those words of St Paul, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ (s)* : And again, *Brethren, be followers together of me (t)*, *Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God (u)*, &c. I know it is easy to put smooth, glossy interpretations upon these and other texts of Scripture, and so to conform the whole Bible to the manner in which we choose to live, instead of conforming our lives to the Bible; which many are bold enough to do, and so *wrest the Scriptures to their own (x) destruction**; but I think it would be rather more prudent, if they would first make it appear, that when the holy Ghost says one thing, he means another, otherwise, till it can be proved that this holy Apostle went to BALLS, and that they tend to promote the glory of God; I cannot conceive how it can be thought

(s) 1 Cor. xi. 1.

(t) 1 Cor. iv. 16.

(u) 1 Cor. x. 35.

(x) 2 Pet. iii. 16.

* It is amazing how some people (especially such as *have a name to live and are dead*), will twist and torture the Scriptures in order to bring the meaning of texts to the ideas already formed in their minds, and to lull themselves into a wretched security, whilst by dividing their hearts between God and the world, they are buried in lukewarmness and blinded by formality. Thus almost every expression in the whole book of God that enjoins an holiness of life beyond what suits their taste and convenience, they either tell you is confined to *primitive times*, or is not to be taken in a *literal sense*. And when neither of these *salvo's* will serve their turn, rather than suffer their eyes to be opened to see the naked state of their souls, they will quarrel with the translation. So that setting aside what is confined to primitive times, what is not to be taken in a literal sense, and what is not translated according to the fancy of men of corrupt minds; Christians now-a-days would be deprived of no inconsiderable part of God's word.

thought lawful for us to go to them, who are so solemnly called upon to imitate him, and to make the glory of God the end of all our actions.

Now only figure to yourself the *chosen vessel* St *Paul*, with the Virgin *Mary* for his partner*, dressed out in fashionable taste, dancing together in a modern assembly? Would not such a sight immediately destroy the high ideas you entertain of their piety? Your own heart must tell you that it would. Again, was you to meet with any history wherein either of these eminent saints were set forth as frequenters of BALLS, and lovers of Dancing; would you give any credit to that history? Certainly you would not; and for this excellent reason, because you always justly looked upon the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*, and upon the Mother of our blessed Saviour, as extraordinary examples of piety; and because your notions of a Saint and a Dancer, are as contrary as light and darkness. I appeal to your own conscience if this be not true? Now to apply this. If to see St *Paul* and the blessed Virgin crossing over or figuring together in a country dance, would entirely destroy the exalted opinion you have of them; and if you would not give credit to any history that should represent them to have been fond of dancing, as being utterly inconsistent

* I think I ought to make an apology to the Christian reader for introducing this supposition, as the very mention of it does not only carry with it an absurdity, but savours of something shocking; yet there is no reason why the thought of seeing an Apostle jumping about in a *Ball-room*, should be shocking to a Christian, but what should make it as shocking for any Christian whatever to see himself there, unless he is determined to set at nought the above command of St *Paul*, namely, *Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ*.

consistent with your thoughts of their great sanctity ; how can you flatter yourself that your Religion will be of any service to you, whilst you give into such practices as are totally destructive of all your own sentiments of piety ?

It may be objected, that you are not the mother of Christ, nor called upon to be an Apostle. I answer, that though you are neither the Mother of Christ, nor called upon to be an Apostle ; yet you are as much called upon to be a servant and child of God, *to be a new creature in Christ Jesus (y)*, to aspire after perfect holiness, and to *strive to enter in at the strait gate (z)*, as either the Virgin Mary or any of the Apostles ; nor can you, without renouncing both Reason and Religion, indulge yourself in any practice that appears to you totally inconsistent with the piety of any other Christian whatever, and at the same time fancy that you are *abstaining from all appearance of evil, and are of the number of those whose spirit and soul and body shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ **.

SECTION THE FOURTH.

Christianity consists not in any form of duties, but in a temper and spirit of growing conformity to Jesus Christ ; and wherever this is wanting, there can be no vital Religion. This is too often mistaken by those who measure Religion by shew and profession ; and hence many run into
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(y) 2 Cor. v. 17.

(z) Matth. vii. 13.

* 1 Thess. v. 22, 23.

the strangest absurdities, whilst by a mixture of holy duties, and a round of vain amusements, they compose a motley character; which, whilst by its decency it gains the esteem of the world, and supports the pride of formality, is utterly destitute of every internal principle of the divine life. A little development may perhaps place this character in a more striking light. I will suppose you, what you suppose yourself, *a very good sort of body*: As such you make it a constant practice to go to the Sacrament, yet you continue to allow yourself in what the world calls its Diversions, BALLS, ASSEMBLIES, &c. Should I ask you how you can think these things consistent, you will tell me, that if the one is necessary, the other is innocent. But pray how comes it to pass, if you think it thus innocent, that you look upon it, among the other parts of the *preparation for the Sacrament*, to abstain *that* week from BALLS and places of entertainment? Is there not a consciousness in your heart, that there is a manifest inconsistency, for the same persons, within a few days distance, to lead up a Dance, and kneel at the Lord's Table; to sparkle to-night amidst the train of pleasure, and follow with the greatest delight the sound of a fiddle, and to-morrow to fall prostrate before a crucified Saviour, pouring forth tears, *whilst you look on him whom you have pierced, and mourn (a)*? Now, absurd as this is, it is the practice of many who would pass for devout. Indeed according to the present system of lukewarmness,

(a) Zech. xii. 10.

warmness, (when to go to the Lord's Supper *three times* a year is by the *most* judged piety sufficient, and to attend a *monthly* Communion is godliness above the common level,) this may do well enough, and the self-denial is not great. For supposing a *weekly* BALL, at the worst, they would only twelve times in the year be absent from it. But now suppose these absenters from BALLS the Communion-week, had lived nearer the primitive times, when they not only on the first day of the week assembled *for breaking of bread, and for prayer, but from house to house* (b), through the week, *remembered their Lord's death, till he come*; they must either have entirely given up their BALL, or been utterly excluded from the Communion of the faithful.

To enter a *Ball-room* on the *Thursday* of the Passion-week, the day before the crucifixion of the Lord of life and glory, would certainly be reckoned profane by those who have the lowest notions of the Christian Religion. It would indicate great insensibility to that astonishing Sacrifice, and great carelessness about the effects of it. But is it not the Christian's duty to remember this *every day* of his life, and to live under the influence, and in the view of that awful transaction, as much as on the *Thursday* of the Passion-week? I believe the Scripture will not give you the least reason to suppose, that what would be profane then, would not at any other season be unbecoming the soul, who is always enjoined to be *looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of*

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(b) Acts ii. 46.

the Lord (c), and remembers him at his table for this very purpose, that he may continually have his loins girt, and his light burning; and he himself be as one that waiteth for the bridegroom, when he will return to the marriage (d).

Can it be doubted, whether or no, what is acknowledged to indispose our hearts for waiting upon God, and unfits us for the duties of love which we owe each other, ought to be avoided by those who are commanded to *be ready for every good word and work (e)*? I have spoken before of the indisposition for prayer which such amusements occasion; I would add a word more with regard to another social duty. Should you receive a message from any near friend or relation, whilst you were in the midst of a Dance, that he was very ill, and desired once more to receive the pledges of a Saviour's love, before he went to his bosom, no more to *drink of the fruit of the vine till he should drink it new with Christ in the kingdom of his Father*; that as you were near and dear to him, your company would be desirable, that he might here take as it were a solemn farewell of you, till you should meet again; I suppose you would not think yourself in a proper state to be a meet partaker of this holy Ordinance, after having been talking for hours together of nothing but vanity; as, "How prodigiously warm it is; how well or ill such a Lady looks; what a shocking figure such a one is, what a sweet silk she had on, and how genteely she is dressed;

(c) 2 Pet. iii. 12.

(d) Luke xii. 35, 36.

(e) Tit. iii. 1.

“ dressed; how many couples there are, how
“ many pretty Dances have been called, how Miss
“ such an one and her partner flirted it away toge-
“ ther, and much more of the like conversation
“ *to the use of edifying:*” Consider seriously whether
after such a scene you would not have cause to fear,
that were you called to receive the Communion of
the body and blood of Christ, you would *eat and*
drink unworthily, and consequently *damnation to your-*
self; and that therefore you must refuse the last kind
office to your dying friend? And if so, you may ea-
sily discover, that whatever in your conduct occasi-
ons this, is as utterly inconsistent with true charity,
and love of your brother, as it is contrary to the
duty and love you owe to Christ and God.

You will say, perhaps, there is a time for all
things. In answer, I would ask, whether a Chris-
tian can ever innocently allow himself in any prac-
tice whereby the temper of his heart is so far dis-
composed, as to unfit him for a communion of
Saints, and fellowship with the Father and the
Son? And whether if death should seize him in
this state, he must not necessarily be excluded from
both for ever? A thought that deserves the most
awakened attention!

SECTION THE FIFTH.

WHAT need is there of any more arguments
against the unchristian diversion of BALLS?
I trust that what I have said already is sufficient to
convince every reasonable person that they are a

scandal to a Christian country. I proceed therefore to examine how it comes to pass that the wickedness of BALLS is so little perceived, that many inconsiderate, well-meaning persons, continue to go to them without ever being sensible how great a sin they commit in so doing: I say, how great a sin they commit, because though they may not be conscious of any sin at all, yet wilful ignorance is no plea for innocence: Else the Jews had been guilty of no crime in crucifying the *Lord of life*, nor St *Paul* in persecuting Christ and his Church; who nevertheless styles himself on that account *the chief of sinners (f)*; alluding, as he himself assures us, to those very sins he committed ignorantly.

The principal cause why the wickedness of BALLS is so little attended to, is their having been so long established, and frequented by so many people who make an *outward shew* of Religion; which inclines persons to think that a custom set up as it were by law, in a nation professing faith in the name of Jesus, and countenanced even by such as are esteemed pious Christians, can neither be sinful in itself, nor attended with any pernicious consequences: But a little consideration will convince us of the fallacy of such reasoning; for it must be allowed, that no custom in itself sinful, (as I have fully proved that of BALLS to be) can alter its nature, either by being long established, by being set up in a Christian country, or because it is conformed to by such as are called *good Christians*; but on the contrary, the guilt of every sin
whatever

(f) 1 Tim. i. 15.

whatever is aggravated in proportion to the time we have for reflection, and the light afforded us for avoiding it; and there is no reason to doubt but that the Devil takes a far greater satisfaction in seeing people fall into his snares in a land where Christianity is the established Religion, than in a nation of *Pagans* or *Mahometans*.

Further, would we seriously consider how strangely custom metamorphoses the nature of things in the minds of weak people, and what extravagancies all its votaries must inevitably fall into; would we consider this, I am persuaded we should not suffer ourselves to be hurried away by a blind conformity to its laws, without weighing the fatal consequences; which is the case with such multitudes, who are contented to do wrong, meerly because others have done so before them; and because they never suspect that so many people who are looked upon as *good Christians*, are all the while leading them to perdition.

For instance, *Sunday* in Popish countries is the chief day for *Horse-races*, *Plays*, *Balls*, *Cards*, &c. and there are few Papists who think there is any more harm in going to these diversions on a *Sunday*, than on any other day, because custom makes no difference between them; whereas in *England* many who make no scruple of being present at these entertainments on a week-day, would yet look upon any body as monstrously wicked, that should endeavour to persuade them to go to an *Horse-race*, a *Play*, a *Ball*, or a *Card-table*, on a *Sunday*.

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The case is exactly the same with regard to BALLS; I verily believe there are many people who fancy they commit no sin in going to them; whereas some centuries ago, had one Christian proposed to another, to take him to caper all night at a BALL, he would either have thought him mad, or that instead of *renouncing all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world* (g), he intended to renounce his Christianity.

Thus we see that custom is well called a second nature. Custom has the mighty power of confounding right and wrong, and in the eyes of a deluded world, can turn virtues into vices, and vices into virtues. Custom has converted that heavenly virtue of *humility*, which the Son of God was practising all the while he was on earth, into *meanness of spirit*, and has constituted *him* alone a *man of honour*, who pays his gaming-debts, and scorns to forgive an injury. Custom esteems unchastity to be little or no fault in a man, yet custom esteems it so hainously criminal in a woman, that none of her own sex (though perhaps ten thousand times more wicked than herself) will ever associate with her; no, not even though she give the most evident proofs of a sincere repentance. Whereas if she had every other vice imaginable, and every diabolical temper centered in her, custom would nevertheless suffer her to pass for a *woman of strict virtue*. These are a few instances of the power of custom in our Christian land. And yet how few do we find, who do not willingly

(g) Baptismal Vow.

lingly bow down to this bewitching idol? Alas! few indeed. Shall we then tamely follow every *blind guide* that assumes the name of a Christian? Or shall we rather make the unerring word of God our rule of life? Surely we cannot hesitate in the choice. Indeed I think it may with great truth be affirmed, that the *formal, nominal Christian* is an adversary we have more need to guard against; than either the *professed Atheist*, or the most *abandoned Profligate*; because we suspect no harm from the former, but are ready to fly from the latter as from a toad or a serpent. *It is not an open enemy*, saith the Psalmist, *that hath done me this dishonour, for then I could have born it; neither was it mine adversary, for then, peradventure, I would have bid myself from him; but it was thou, my companion, my guide, and my own familiar friend (b).* Satan is never so likely to succeed with those whom he cannot prevail upon to run into any gross sins, as when he *transforms himself into an angel of light (i)*; under which mask, he has always many useful agents in the world, by following whose examples there is too much reason to fear, that numbers of souls have been ruined to all eternity, who never so much as suspected their danger, till it was too late to retrieve their fatal error.

But how should it be otherwise, whilst in the depraved age we live in, multitudes are looked upon as good Christians, whom our holy ancestors would not have admitted to their communion? yet these modern saints give into the follies and vanities

(b) Psal. lv. 12.

(i) 2 Cor. xi. 14.

vanities of the world without the least hesitation ; and thereby become stumbling-blocks to many inexperienced souls, who seeing such people idolized for their Religion, think they may be very safe under the sanction of such approved examples : But surely little need be said to demonstrate the absurdity of such a conclusion ; since, as I observed before, there can be no other rule of practice but the infallible word of God ; therefore, if we see any person chime in with such customs as are totally opposite to the Divine precepts therein contained, whatever that person may be in the opinion of the world, and of his own *deceitful heart*, he is by no means a proper pattern for a Christian to copy after. The only examples proposed to our imitation are those of Christ and his Apostles, and it is our constant duty to imitate them as far as ever we can, and in the same degree that the primitive Christians did ; for the same JESUS died for us, that died for them, and if we expect the same reward, he expects the same obedience ; yet how different are the lives of the generality of Christians now, from what they were in the first ages of the Church ?

Were St *Austin*, St *Chrysostom*, St *Cyprian*, or any other of those pious Fathers, to rise from the dead, and take a view of our metropolis (especially of the polite part of it) and after having spent some time in it, to hear by chance that it was a Christian city, that the inhabitants of it were ingrafted into the Church by Baptism, and professed themselves to be disciples of the blessed JESUS ;
judge,

judge, if you can, how great would be the surprise of any of these holy men at such an account. I am apt to think they would with great difficulty be made to credit it ; a plain proof how far the power of custom and example may be prevalent to cast a blindness over such as *profess and call themselves Christians* ; a blindness ten thousand times more dreadful than *Egyptian* darkness, inasmuch as it is more deplorable to have a veil drawn over the eyes of our souls than over the eyes of our bodies.

SECTION THE SIXTH.

HAVING shewn that the reason why many people are apt to fancy they can go to BALLS without committing any sin, is entirely owing to the force of *custom* and *example* ; I would now beg leave to offer a serious *admonition* to all such as have hitherto been frequenters of them, and are any ways concerned about their everlasting welfare.

Now since the power of custom and example is so great, and so much depends upon our conforming or not conforming to it ; let me intreat you, in the words of the beloved disciple, *not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God* (k), before you suffer yourself to be led by them : Remember that Christ himself hath told us, that *not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of his Father which is in heaven* (l) ; and whatever a sleepy conscience may persuade any man to

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(k) 1 John iv. 1.

(l) Matt. vii. 14.

think of himself, because he sees many in his own opinion worse, yet St Paul tells us, *not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth* (m).

Now the word of truth assures us, that *to be carnally minded is death* (n), *that the friendship of the world is enmity with God* (o), *that we must neither love the world, nor the things that are in the world; that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him* (p): *that the end of those who mind earthly things, is destruction* (q): *that if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his* (r): *that the fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance* (s): *that unless Christ be in us, we are reprobates* (t); *that whatsoever we do in word or in deed, we must do all in the name of the Lord JESUS, giving thanks to God and the Father by him* (u): *that we must be holy in all manner of conversation* (x); *and shall be called upon to give an account of every idle word at the day of judgment* (y); *that we must in any wise rebuke our neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him* (z); *that our speech must be always seasoned with grace* (a), *and our communication be to the use of edifying, fit to minister grace unto the hearers* (b): *that our conversation must be*
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(m) 2 Cor. x. 18.

(o) James iv. 4.

(q) Philip. iii. 19.

(s) Gal. v. 22.

(u) Coloss. iii. 17.

(y) Matt. xii. 36.

(a) Coloss. iv. 6.

(n) Rom. viii. 6.

(p) 1 John ii. 15.

(r) Rom. viii. 9.

(t) 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

(x) 1 Pet. i. 15.

(z) Lev. xix. 17.

(b) Ephes. iv. 29.

in heaven (c), and such as becometh the Gospel of Christ (d).

As these passages are only a small specimen of the constant language of our Saviour and his Apostles, what pretensions can they have to the name of Christians, in whom scarcely any of the before-mentioned marks are to be found; inso-much that they are as totally ignorant of the life and power of Religion, as a blind man is of colours; and know no more of a change of heart, than they do of the change of earth for heaven, or of their *natural for a spiritual body*: yet some how or other these miserable hypocrites contrive to keep conscience at quiet by some formal external duties, and by flattering themselves that as they have never been guilty of any gross, enormous sins, they are as sure of heaven as if they were there already; little thinking what a sea of iniquity their hearts are full of, and that the holy law of God condemns all those who have not secured an interest in the Redeemer, for the least sinful thought or indulgence, as well as for the most notorious acts of wickedness; the word of God being, as saith St Paul, *a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (e)*. But though the Apostle tells them so plainly that *to be carnally-minded is death (f)*; that *the friendship of the world is enmity with God (g)*; and that *if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him (b)*; yet they read these alarm-

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ing

(c) Philip. iii. 20.

(e) Heb. iv. 12.

(g) James iv. 4.

(d) Philip. i. 27.

(f) Rom. viii. 6.

(b) 1 John ii. 15.

ing texts with as much unconcern as if they had nothing to do with them, whilst the same love of this world, the same attachment to its customs, follies, and vanities, influence them as much (if not more) than they influence a Jew or a Heathen. How wide then are these Dispositions from that deadness to the world, and that humble child-like temper, without which our Lord hath declared that *we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven* (i).

Again, when we are so positively told in Scripture, that unless *Jesus Christ be in us we are reprobates*, and that if *any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his* (k); yet far from having this Spirit of Christ, or desiring to have it, there are many who are quite enraged against them to whom it has pleased the Lord to give his Spirit; and fancy that *they do God service*, when they exclaim against them as enthusiasts, fools, and madmen: hereby plainly proving themselves to be *none of Christ's*, but to be of those *natural men* who, as St Paul declares, *cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God* (l), *because they are foolishness unto them*; and therefore (as the author of the book of *Wisdom* tells us) *account the life of the truly religious man to be madness* (m).

Moreover, when we are so strictly enjoined *to exhort one another daily* (n); *to be holy in all manner of conversation* (o); and *to let our communication be to the use of edifying, fit to minister grace unto the Hearers*;

(i) Matt. xviii. 3.

(l) 1 Cor. ii. 14.

(n) Heb. iii. 13.

(k) Rom. viii. 9.

(m) Wisd. v. 4.

(o) 1 Pet. i. 15.

Hearers (p); is it not amazing that multitudes of souls should be so infatuated as to fancy themselves to be in safe state, whilst they live in a total neglect of these express commands, and can sit and rack their inventions to rake up all the nonsensical chat of the town, and had rather talk for hours together upon the most trifling subjects, than for a moment upon *the one thing needful* (q); inasmuch that *religious conversation*, which is so essential a part of our duty, and the delight of every true believer, is almost the only kind of discourse that is excluded, not only in public companies, when it might not always be proper to introduce it, because we are forbid *to cast our pearls before swine* (r), but even amongst intimate friends in their more retired hours *.

Nay, so little true Religion is there amongst many formal Church-going people, that I wish it were an exaggeration to say, that they have not only a perfect loathing to all holy discourse, but would even look with astonishment upon any person, and either think his head turned, or that he
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(p) Ephes. iv. 29.

(q) Luke x. 42.

(r) Matt. vii. 6.

* Can there be a more dismal sign that there is not a spark of Religion in such Hearts? For *where the treasure is, there will the heart be also*; Matt. vi. 21. and *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, Matt. xii. 34. The Glutton's delight is to talk of eating; the Drunkard's of drinking; the Sportsman's of his horses and dogs. The most agreeable topic to a fine Lady is dress and diversions. And the Christian is never so happy, as when discoursing about *the things of God* and his soul. This is an infallible touch-stone whereby we may try ourselves; therefore, wo unto those whose hearts condemn them in this respect.

was guilty of a breach of polite behaviour, should he dare in their presence to mention † *the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ in dying for our sins*, or even to introduce his sacred Name, except in witty sayings, or profane exclamations.

These are distinguishing marks whereby the *nominal* professor * may be often discerned by us; let us now see how these bitter enemies and utter strangers to true Religion are described in Scripture.

Solomon calls them *a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet not cleansed from their filthiness (s)*. The prophet *Isaiab*, and after him our blessed Saviour, calls them *a people that honoureth him with their lips, but their heart is far from him (t)*. Holy *David* expostulates with them in the following words; *what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth; seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee (u)*? St *Paul* describes them, as *having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof (x)*. It is said of them, *Rev. iii. 1. that they have a name to live, and are dead*.

And lastly, they are thus described, and the following tremendous sentence is pronounced against them

† Communion Service.

* *Seest thou one that is wise in his own conceit, saith Solomon, there is more hope of a fool than of him; so of all persons whatever, the moral self-righteous Pharisees, are the most unwilling to receive the Gospel. For they that are whole, that is (those who think themselves so) need not a physician but those that are sick, as our Saviour himself assures us.*

(s) Prov. xxx. 12.

(t) Isai. xxix. 13.

(u) Psal. l. 16, 17.

(x) 2 Tim. iii. 5.

them by our Lord himself, from the mouth of his holy Angel, *Rev. iii. 15, 16, 17. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot; so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth; because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: therefore anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayst see.*

When we observe the generality of people who are called Christians, how many more do we see who answer these marks than those before given? A dismal proof, that numbers are lost through a false confidence of salvation, and of the truth of our Saviour's prediction concerning these latter days; that *because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold* (y).

This prophecy is indeed so exactly fulfilled at present; that instead of that Religion, whereby we dedicate *ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable holy and lively sacrifice unto God* (z), the skeleton of it scarcely remains.

I fear we shall find this assertion verified in the character of *Lucinda*.

Lucinda is affable, obliging, and universally esteemed by her acquaintance, who look upon her as a woman of extraordinary prudence and piety. She would not for the world omit her Morning and Evening Prayers; she constantly reads the Psalms and Lessons of the day; she never is absent from

(y) Matt. xxiv. 12.

(z) Communion Service.

from Church on *Sundays*, and would oftener go there on week-days, if she was not prevented by engagements to go with her friends into the city, to see what Mercer keeps the most fashionable silks; or else by business of importance at home; such as the reception of some visitors, or necessary discourse with her Millener; or perhaps it is the Dancing-master's morning, and she knows her children will not take half the pains they ought in so material a branch of their education, unless she herself is present.

Lucinda goes every other month to the Sacrament, besides the three great Festivals, and hears her children say their Catechism every *Sunday* evening; she frequently gives sixpence or a shilling to the poor; and never dines till after Evening Service upon *Asb-wednesday*, *Good-Friday*, and the *thirtieth of January*, when she makes an hearty meal upon costly fish and rich sauce*.

Lucinda is a bitter enemy to *naughty women*, and often tells you how much she is shocked at the indecent language of the common people in the streets; yet this very same *Lucinda* as readily pays her money for a place in that choice Tabernacle of Satan, called a *Play-house* (where she enjoys the company of many of the rakes and prostitutes of

* Notwithstanding all *Lucinda's* duties, I fear it may be affirmed that she never prayed or fasted in all her life, and that she is an utter stranger to every spark of charity. Whoever will consider the difference there is between praying and saying of prayers, and look at the description given of charity by *St Paul*, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. and that of fasting, by the prophet *Isaiab* (Isai. lviii. 3, 4, &c.) will probably be of the same opinion,

general satisfaction it gives to almost all sorts of people; and declares, that it is a sad sign of the depravity of the times, when Clergymen are preferred and patronized for writing indecent books.

Lucinda has now and then some twinges of conscience, but these are presently silenced by reflecting how much more religious she is, than any of her acquaintance; and by calling to mind her duties; or if this will not do, another chapter in the Bible, and somewhat extraordinary to the first Beggar she meets, presently sets all to rights again.

Such is *Lucinda*, who has as much reason to fancy herself already a glorified Saint in heaven, as that there is any possibility of her arriving there as she goes on at present; yet how many souls are building their hopes of salvation upon such a Religion as this; and for no other reason in the world but because they see others, that are looked upon as excellent Christians, going on in the same way, and in the same wretched delusion with themselves; whereas if they would candidly *search the Scriptures*, I question not but they would find themselves condemned in almost every page of the Gospel.

Some people will perhaps cry out, surely this is talking very *uncharitably*, for at this rate how few will be saved? But they cannot tell what they mean, except they would have us *make God a liar*; and in order to lull our poor fellow-creatures into the fatal dream of carnal security, assert, that he will admit them into heaven upon terms contrary to those laid down in his own Word. That
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found pillar of our excellent Church, Bishop Hall, in his *Character of a real Christian*, has these words; “ I would it were uncharitable to say, there are “ many *Professors*, few *Christians*; if words and “ forms might carry it, Christ would have clients “ enough.”

Our blessed Saviour assures us, *that broad is the way, and wide is the gate, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat*; and, *that narrow is the way, and strait is the gate, that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it* (b): Yet how composedly do many persons repeat these awakening passages, who at the same time are confirming the truth of them; and though perhaps they live in no outward enormities, do nevertheless swim with the stream, till they fall into the gulph of endless misery. But if we allow our Saviour to speak truth in these places, we can have no more terrible proof of our being in *the way that leads to destruction*, than when we are doing as the generality of the world do; nor can we have any better evidence of our being in the right way, than when we are resolved to act contrary to the torrent of custom, and are regardless of *being thought particular*; concerning which Satan’s instruments talk so learnedly in their Lectures upon the necessity of a *prudent compliance with the world*, in order to affright God’s children from their obedience.

Again, when we are told in Scripture, *that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and that the violent take it by force* (c); that it is easier for a

F 2

camel

(b) Matt. vii. 13, 14.

(c) Matt. xi. 12.

camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven (d); that whoever will come after Christ, must deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow him (e); that many are called, but few chosen (f); that the righteous are scarcely saved (g); that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven (h); and, that many shall seek to enter in, and not be able (i). I say, when we read these, and other texts of the like nature, we must needs imagine, that it is not so easy a matter to get to heaven as many people are apt to fancy, who seem to have found out quite a new road thither, very different from *that strait narrow way*, to which our Saviour has directed us, and in which whosoever now dares to walk, will be told that he is *righteous over-much*, and solemnly cautioned against *the danger of running into extremes*, and *carrying matters too far*: But this is no more than must be expected in an age wherein so many do at once *glory in their shame* (k), and are ashamed of that in which they ought to glory (l). An age wherein *formality* supplies the place of *vital Christianity*, and in which *spirituality* and *enthusiasm* are so far become synonymous terms, that a person is looked upon as little less than mad as soon as he comes to the right use of his understanding. An age wherein *the pure doctrines of Scripture and of the Reformation*, are set aside for *lifeless morality and dry systems of ethics*; and a steady adherence

(d) Matt. xix. 24.

(f) Matt. xx. 16.

(h) Acts xiv. 22.

(k) Philip. iii. 19.

(e) Matt. xvi. 24.

(g) 1 Pet. iv. 18.

(i) Luke xiii. 24.

(l) Gal. vi. 14.

adherence to the *truly evangelical tenets of the established Church*, is sufficient to gain a man a *nickname*, and to make him become a *by-word among the people* (m).

Let us therefore, as we value our immortal souls, take heed how we suffer ourselves to be led astray by any wretched pretenders to Christianity, and carefully avoid all those snares which the Devil and his adherents have established in this land, which has been so justly visited with the judgments of a righteous God for our crying sins and horrible lukewarmness.

Let us reflect what those who have been cut off without having made their peace with God through Christ their Redeemer, and have felt the punishments of the damned; let us, I say, reflect what *they* would do, could they begin their lives again, or obtain one such opportunity of repentance, as God of his infinite mercy now vouchsafes to us. Would *they* waste any of their precious time in BALLS, and such like vagaries, and dance for hours together upon the frightful precipice of eternity, not knowing but the next moment might hurry them again into those inexpressible torments they once experienced, *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; where there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth* (n).

Judge therefore yourselves, Brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord (o); and take heed, according to the Apostle's advice, *that you refuse not him that*

(m) Job xvii. 6.

(n) Mark ix. 44.

(o) Communion Service.

that calleth (p) ; for the God of Truth hath said, that his Spirit shall not always strive with man (q) : To-day therefore, whilst it is called to-day, barden not your hearts ; but calmly and seriously reflect, what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God (r), whose word is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit (s) ; and who, to his enemies, is even a consuming fire (t) ; and able to destroy both body and soul in hell (u).

Consider, I beseech you consider, that these are not *airy phantoms* and *idle tales*, but they are awful and interesting truths, truths that are founded upon the word of God, and such as should make the unrenewed heart of every *self-deceiving formalist* to tremble ; wherefore I pray God they may sink deep into your consciences, and excite you fly to JESUS the Saviour of all that truly turn unto him ; and if you are sensible of your need of a Redeemer, and will come as a lost, undone sinner, *not trusting in your own righteousness, but in his manifold and great mercies (x)*, there is no doubt but he will wash you clean by his precious all-atoning blood, and clothe you with the robe of his perfect righteousness ; and being thus *made free from sin*, and *become servants to God*, be urgent in imploring the continuance of divine grace, to enable you to *walk worthy of your vocation*, in all holiness and good works. Then shall you find, (but never by the

(p) Heb. xii. 25.

(r) Heb. x. 31.

(t) Heb. xii. 29.

(x) Communion Service.

(q) Gen. vi. 3.

(s) Heb. iv. 12.

(u) Matt. x. 28.

the palliating and superficial divinity of too many in our days,) that the ways of Religion *are ways of pleasantness*, and that *all her paths are peace* (y).

THE CONCLUSION.

HAVING answered the arguments commonly brought in vindication of BALLS, and produced several proofs of their evil tendency and actual wickedness; having shewn the reasons why, notwithstanding these diabolical diversions have gotten such root, and the sinfulness of them is so little perceived, that many unwary souls go to them without suspecting their danger: Having admonished you to beware of a blind conformity to custom, and of the examples of *nominal Christians*, and given some marks whereby such may generally be discerned from those who are *Christians altogether*; and lastly, having exhorted you to *flee from the wrath to come* (z), unto Him who is able and willing to *save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him* (a); yet I cannot conclude without observing that it is indeed a melancholy reflection, that custom should have so far blinded the eyes of many, as to make a demonstration of this kind necessary; but since this is the case, all proper care, I hope, has been taken to set forth these enormities under their true colours, which, I trust, I have now done without the least aggravation; and if it can be proved that I have asserted any thing

(y) Prov. iii. 17.

(a) Heb. vii. 25.

(z) Matt. iii. 7.

thing whatever that is not strictly agreeable to holy Scripture and plain reason, I readily give up the point *.

I am sensible that if any body in the first ages of the Church had attempted to prove that no *Christian* could go to BALLS, PLAYS, ROUTS, REVELLINGS, and such like, without disgracing his holy profession, his arguments would have been looked upon to be as unnecessary, as those of a man who, in these days, should write a *folio* in order to prove, that the Sun shines on a bright day, and his labour as needless as that of one who should go through all the rules of arithmetic to shew that *two and two make four*; but,

Tempora mutantur, nos & mutamur in illis!

The Church cou'd once her Golden Ages boast;

But sad Experience shews those Times are lost!

* Though I trust I have advanced nothing against *Balls* and *Plays*, but what can be warranted by the best authority; yet I may be perhaps thought rather too severe in having censured THE FLOURISHING TRADE OF CARD-PLAYING, for since we read in history of a *Roman Emperor* who spent his time in *catching of flies*, surely our *modern Nobility and Gentry* may justly claim the privilege of diverting themselves a few hours in an evening (especially as it may be done so very consistently with the fashionable ideas of piety) in *counting black and red spots*, and asking *What's trump, who shuffled, who cut and who dealt?* as also of *building houses with their Cards*, and *blowing them down again*, by way of changing the amusement, whenever they think proper.

The E N D.

